



Summer 1966

The Lantern Vol. 32, No. 3, Summer 1966

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Recommended Citation

Bender, Craig; Bald, Barbara Ann; Church, Connie; Hall, Jeffrie Ann; Bray, Barbara; Zucker, Barbara; Sharpe, Robert; and Kegerise, Susan, "The Lantern Vol. 32, No. 3, Summer 1966" (1966). *The Lantern Literary Magazines*. 82.
<https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern/82>

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URSINUS COLLEGE

LANTERN



SUMMER 1966

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We (of the *Lantern* staff) depart now from the surrealism and super-realism of traditional college literature. We present instead the sometimes idyllic world of Spring. The theme is backed by a cast of "children, lovers, and friends," and, of course, a traditional "nowhere man" or two. We feel that the world is not so disillusioning, corrupt, and unfair that it can not be enjoyed *occasionally* in a contemplative and idyllic way. It is naive to suppose there is no beauty or innocence in life. It is silly not to enjoy it as a parent enjoys the baby years of his child's life, as a bachelor enjoys his last years of freedom.

Realizing there are many other important viewpoints of life, we shall try to emphasize another aspect in each succeeding issue. One or more may be yours.

We were only able to take this view-of-life approach and semblance of unity because of the number and quality of contributions. And so we wish to congratulate you for bringing the *Lantern* to its present heights. Only through your continued contributions can we continue to produce a magazine of color, interest, and unity.

Behind you, you have had a rich summer from which to reap and record experiences. Happy harvest.

—Craig Bender

Lantern Editor

Commandment Point

—Craig Bender

STORM PRELUDE

Gray flannel skies, ominously grumbling,
Spitting brisk wisps of wind across the rebel lake,
Shadow the seaside cinema.
Beneath the mighty marble buttresses of Commandment Point,
The restive waves shoot against the rock—
Shattering thickly into broken fragments of water.
Smoky wind spasmodically slaps dead leaves
And sends them in scratch-clacking retreat.
Silver rain begins to rattle the dead leaves
And splatter the essence of dry earth.
The rain tempo increases, shooting forays
Of rain drops through the dry rattling trees.
The sky frowns disapprovingly.

CRISIS

Rain blurs the black horizon
With silver haze.
Forays of rain
 shoot across
 crackling
Terrain and crashing sea,

Pounding out staccato rhythms,
Torturing the murky, eerie waters
That foam like cauldrons of hell.
Raging seas squirm beneath the sting of
Needling pellets of gleaming rain.
The sea rises bodylessly to subdue the rock; and—
Failing—falls into despondently surging seas.
Again and again relentlessly,
Hurtling forward with
Reckless rage. Smash. Up!
(Sea climbing the insurmountable marble rock;)
Slashing!
Crushing! Climbing! Groping!
Falling! Swallowed by its own fury.

REMORSE

Clouds of cleansing foam
Wash off the once slate sky.
Pacific blues beam through cloud recesses
Throwing a heavenly hue on the Rock
And the Sea.
Commandment Point stands solid and stalwart;
Its white marble sprays spectres
Of light from the pacific sky.
Beneath the eternal marble buttresses
The wrinkling waves meekly lick
Its seaweed-stained feet.

The Descendant

Though domesticated life had made him less cautious than his ancestors, his innate feline qualities still reigned supreme. His form, like that of a puma, was streamlined to enable him to slither through the reeds and intertwined brambles of the wilderness. It was this sleekness that clearly marked him a descendant of the great cats. He had no spots or stripes to serve as camouflage, but his coloring was indeed protective. With his tawny-beige coat and ebony features—face, tail, and paws—he blended perfectly with the twigs, decayed leaves, and shadows of the forest. Amid nature's shades of burnt amber, bronze-tan, and coal black, he could, for hours, go unnoticed even by a woodland expert.

Not accustomed to such freedom, the cat appeared slightly confused as to which direction to choose. Such cacophony puzzled him; for warbling, croaking, buzzing, and gurgling constituted sounds that, if he had ever heard them before, were now lost to his memory. Yet, in an instant, all uncertainty and insecurity vanished. Majestically, with an independent mien, he continued his journey—leaving a warm basket, a loving master, and an assured meal far behind him.

With his small nose that was indiscernible from the rest of his black face, he captured the smell of pine sap, still water, and all odors of the wild. Reawakening feline instincts that homelife and love had suppressed, the scents lured him deeper. No longer would he be content to watch goldfish through glass or witness a carefree bird perch upon a picket fence. Now he would conquer! He saw his chance! Several yards away from where he had been lapping dew from the leaves, a cheewink was carelessly rolling in the warm sand.

The cat's once-loving, blue eyes now impended evil. The orbs vibrated with excitement, but not a muscle twitched. As silent as a caterpillar he crept along the border until he was several feet from his victim. Planning to satiate his thirsting instincts, he leaped. But a bell tinkled! And the wee bird vanished. Clad in a blue leather collar, a token of human love, the siamese lay panting in the center of the clearing.

THE ULTIMATE JOURNEY

—*Barbara Ann Bald*

Mounted on the peak of an immense
 blue-green wave,
Then, with cool spray thrilling the innermost
 soul,
Bounding down its steep slopes . . .
A left slide, and the surfer finds himself
 crouching in a flawless pipe—
Speeding through a tube that stretches
 toward infinity.
 Suddenly
Reeling through nothingness, body and board
 are hurled to the ocean floor.
Tons of sea-water thrash flesh
 against biting coral,
And kelp grabs at limp limbs.
Lost in a whirling salt-maze, the mind
 imagines a hobbyhorse, kisses, meal
On the shore — anxious spectators
 stand gaping at the horizon.

THOUGHTS WHILE RIDING NEW YORK SUBWAY

and away she goes where she stops no one knows speed out of control car
crammed full we're all going together yet each separate each an individual
staring out of his walls breathe easier sleep better feel safer with lindsay
need money fast call beneficial brighten up your taste smoke lucky strikes
across the aisle sits thom gunn s boy black leather jacket motor cycle cap
incongruous wedding ring not self defined after all stretch your coffee break
chew juicy bananas girl with hearing aid fortunate hears only what chooses
we have so little to choose hurled along terrifying rapidity grinding halt all
trapped in a cave roof about to collapse salvation coming doubt it forty
second street escape carbon monoxide filled air oblivion coming

Crazy Arthur

—Cloe

“What’s the story, fella?”

“What do you want.” It was a statement, not a question, in the dull monotone of someone who didn’t really want an answer.

“I’d like to get you to come inside with me,” came the answer.

Arthur Masterson looked at the intruder with half closed eyes and mused that this fellow was probably serious or he would not have climbed out on the ledge in the first place. He was obviously a policeman because he wore the standard blue uniform. He looked about forty-five and was already gray at the temples. Arthur could almost see him walking his beat, casually swinging a nightstick, thinking of anything but the job he had as the city’s busboy, picking up its trash and keeping its streets clean. He probably had a family and several children back home so why did he waste his time on someone like Arthur? Perhaps Arthur could jump before this policeman wasted any more time or got himself killed trying to save a failure.

“Forget it”

“Here, let’s have a cigarette and talk it out.”

Even though Arthur had grown up in that house he never did get used to the odor of the place. The living room reeked of stale cigar smoke. It lingered on the old Persian rug and over-stuffed divan with its horse hair cushions long after the smoker had left. It had a dark, musty smell like a house long closed and infrequently visited. He had grown up in that house, rarely leaving it except for the necessary and socially demanded sojourns such as when his mother dragged him off to church every Sunday morning.

His father was a large man, educated in the “school-of-hard-knocks” as he had recounted it many times. He took to smoking large foul cigars and bullying his only child. His mother, a small, domineering, and over-protective woman, would always take his side against his father.

“Now, don’t pick on the boy, dear,” she would whine.

“What’s the matter with the little pantywaist today?” he would demand, and pull Arthur over to examine him while huge clouds of blue-gray smoke drifted into Arthur’s face.

“He had a runny nose and a slight fever this morning, 99 degrees, so

I decided that he should stay home from school and rest. You never can tell with all this flu going around."

By this time Arthur's eyes were streaming tears and the smoke choking him so much that he had to cough.

"There, you see. I knew he had something. Now Arthur, you run right upstairs and get to bed."

"No, Mother, it was only the smoke that made me cough," Arthur would cry.

"Dear, you're just a young thing and so frail. Your mother knows what's best for you."

"Mother," Arthur coughed, "honest, it's only the cigar smoke."

"Do what your mother says. Get going."

Arthur coughed.

"It's not that what you're doing is wrong," the policeman continued. "It's just that there must be some other way to solve your problems." Arthur coughed again and fanned the air in front of him to remove some of the smoke.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Does the smoke bother you?" he asked throwing the cigarette away. Arthur watched it turning over and over as it fell the eight stories to the concrete below.

"I don't smoke," said Arthur following a long pause. "After my father died my mother wouldn't let anyone smoke at home."

"That's right. It's a terrible habit. Been tryin' to stop myself, but it's hard going. You get used to having something in your hand, you know. It's a habit, hard to break."

"Mother would say it is the sign of a weak character."

Dear old Mother had succeeded so well in raising her little boy. Arthur remembered only too vividly the long hours he had spent at the piano practicing again and again the scales and songs his mother liked so much. She would never admit, as his piano teacher had told him, that his hands were just too small ever to be a great pianist. Arthur had to be the best because some day he was going to have a concert. Everyone that ever knew him would come and tell him what an artist he was, even that Kaminski kid down the street who took violin lessons every week that cost ten dollars apiece.

One horrible Saturday his mother invited the entire Women's Club in to hear dear little Arthur play. She repeated to him so often that he was going to uphold the honor of the family, that he was his family's ambassador. His father escaped for the weekend on a long fishing trip. Why hadn't his father taken him along? Simply because Arthur might catch his death of cold sitting on a damp river bank miles from nowhere! How he wanted to escape from the pats on his head and the sugary voices telling him what a good boy he was.

Mrs. Simpson was the first to arrive. As President of the Women's Club she deemed it her personal duty to arrive early and help out. She was a small slender woman with a large mole on her left cheek with several long black hairs growing out of it. She made up for her lack of children with a gusto and economy of action that made her the perfect woman president. Oh, how Arthur's mother wanted to be president of that organization! Arthur's recital would be the feather in her cap, commencing her long climb to the chairmanship.

After all the others had come, Mrs. Kaminski, the arch rival for the presidency, and her precious son Irving arrived, making a grand entrance. She finally wedged her five foot seven, two hundred and thirty pound frame into Mother's prized needlepoint chair. Arthur could see his mother visibly cringe as the chair received its burden with mild protest.

Bespectacled little Irving stood dutifully by his mother's side, like a little gentleman, to be seen and not heard. Under Irving's quivering lip his chin seemed half withdrawn into his neck, stretching his mouth into a perpetual frown. At any second it appeared that he would break into tears. He was obviously no match for Mother's little man, Arthur.

Business was undertaken and dispensed with in ten minutes, the women resolving only that there would be a bridge party the following Tuesday and the next meeting would be held at Mrs. Kaminski's house.

"Did you hear that Mildred Carlson's husband was passed over for that promotion she was talking about?"

"Well, Fred is as nice a fellow as you would ever want to meet, but I never did think he had the potential to get him quite that far."

"Did you see that O'Hara woman? She bleached her hair, silver blonde this time."

"Well, I don't want to mention any names but I heard that . . ."

"Now, now, girls, your fangs are showing," Arthur's mother interrupted. "Arthur is going to play for us . . . Arthur."

Oh, what mock squeals of delight followed, while Mrs. Kaminski nearly exploded, her face livid.

Arthur sat down and addressed the keyboard as he had so many times before. His mother's words ran through his mind again.

"Arthur, just remember that you are your family's ambassador and do the best you can."

Suddenly his small pudgy hands tightened and trembled over the ivory keys, but he forced them to play the notes he had memorized. He could play the songs without seeing the keyboard or sheet music he thought, but his fingers numbed. He groped for each successive note, missing often.

His mother turned her head in disbelief. Mrs. Kaminski's face slowly turned up from ear to ear in a self-contented smile.

It wasn't until later that night they found that Arthur's father had been killed in an automobile accident.

"I never was good at the piano, or anything else I've tried for that matter," Arthur said, slowly looking at his hands.

"What? Oh, that's all right fella. We all can't be a Liberace. Now, why don't you come inside and we'll talk about it?"

"Why don't you just go away and leave me alone. Now you people want me to come back, but you didn't want me for anything half an hour ago."

"That's no way to look at this, fella. It's just that . . . well, it ain't right to die this way."

"It wasn't right for my father to die either, but he went out and did it," the monotone droned on. "He didn't want me either."

Arthur remembered the void that his father's death had left, the void his mother had tried so desperately to fill for both of them. It was not too many years, however, before he left for college, to live away from home for the first time.

"Here's your train ticket, dear. Now don't you worry about going away from home. Adams is a nice small liberal arts college and everything is going to be just like we said it would be. It's such a pretty campus. You're bound to meet new people and make new friends. Just don't forget to write home every chance you get so I know what you are doing. Remember, you're all I have now, son. You're the man in the family and I know you'll make me proud.

"Don't forget to go to church every Sunday and don't skip the chapel. You'll be in good hands, I'm sure. It's so reassuring to know you'll be in a church related school. Good-bye now, dear. Don't forget to write."

His first six weeks had been a living hell, but somehow he had managed through the silliness and senseless brutality of what they called the freshmen orientation program. Once classes began he had something to occupy his mind, and he spent every free moment in the solitude of the library, only to return to his room and find some new and not-too-funny prank played on him. He wrote and told his mother about the fools and unmannered people he had met.

"Arthur, you must remember to make allowances for these people. Some of them are just unfortunate and haven't had all the advantages that your father and I gave you." She had been right again.

"Hello, Mother."

"Hello, baby," the telephone hummed back.

"Now, Mother, I asked you to stop calling me that."

"I'm sorry, dear, it's just that, well, I guess you'll always be my baby, even though you are so far away." Arthur shuddered involuntarily.

"Mother, I'm grown up now. I'm not a baby any longer."

"Yes, dear, you're right of course. I just have trouble realizing it. You're my whole life. You won't hold it against me if I want to hold on, now will you?" she whined.

"No, Mother, you know I wouldn't do that."

"Now tell your Mama how you're doing."

"Oh, all right, I guess. I've been having a little trouble getting all of the history lectures. They talk so fast. But Sheila takes shorthand and helps me get the parts I miss."

"Who is this Sheila, Arthur?"

"She's just the girl who sits next to me in lecture. She really is very nice. I met her a few weeks ago at the President's Tea, you know, the one I wrote you about."

"Who is this girl, Arthur? Where does she come from? Who are her parents?"

"Does it really matter, Mother?"

"Yes, it matters, Arthur. You're up there to get an education, not to chase girls you don't know anything about."

"But it's not like that."

"You stay away from those girls. You have four years of college and then your medical schooling to complete. You don't have the time to run around with girls who are just looking for a husband. Now, you promise me you'll stop seeing this girl and get down to your studies."

Arthur promised. He never had broken a promise to his mother but somehow he couldn't quite get along without Sheila's help and notes in history lecture. Then when she asked him to that turnabout dance, he didn't know what to do. He couldn't say no because he needed those notes for history. He couldn't say yes because he had promised his mother not to have anything to do with this girl. Mother would be furious if she found out he had broken his promise, but she would be even more angry if he didn't get an "A" in history. "Your mother will never know," a friend counseled.

Arthur went to the dance and told himself repeatedly that he was having a terrible time and that he hated the beautiful dress Sheila was wearing. He came home in a good mood in spite of himself, and found a note on his door. To his horror, it said,

Mother called; told her you were out.

Sounded important.

He lay awake for the rest of the night in terror, wondering if she would call back and confront him with his broken promise. The morning and the telephone call that came did not bring him the chastisement he expected. Instead it brought a shock and a sickening dullness that lasted into the months that followed.

It was his uncle on the phone, telling him how his mother had died sometime during the previous night from a fall down the stairs in the old house. His uncle went on to say that Arthur should return and live with him until after the funeral, but Arthur wasn't really listening any longer.

In the months that followed Arthur returned and tried half-heartedly to study in school but was unable to concentrate on anything. He tried to read his assignment, but found himself re-reading the same passage, obliv-

ious to the meaning of the words. He slept a great deal and felt tired most of the time he was awake, or he would suddenly realize that he had been sitting, staring off at nothing for long periods of time. Finally, he did fail out of school and returned home to his uncle who had moved into the old house.

Memories sprang from everywhere in that house to accuse him of breaking his promise and disgracing the family name. He began hiding in his room for days at a time.

Some time later Arthur walked down the long corridor of his new world and entered by habit the door that he had feared so much. Dr. Roland was not in his office but Arthur realized that he had been early for his appointment. It was so busy in the sanatorium he had hoped that Dr. Roland would not forget to come.

A single manila folder on the doctor's desk aroused his curiosity, so Arthur opened it and read:

The patient was admitted in a state of acute depression and suffering from malnutrition. Immediate treatment was

The patient was almost completely inactive and isolated himself from others. He did not speak unless specifically addressed and was extremely slow in his monotone responses

In general he felt quite guilty, blaming himself for his mother's death and his subsequent failure in school

Instead of fighting, he blamed himself for his failures, insisting he was hopelessly inadequate and worthless. His self-prognosis was one of horrible death for himself and anyone who tried to help him

The patient was raised by what must have been an over-protective and demanding Mother. Apparently his father, who died when the boy was quite young, accepted the fact that his son was frail and permitted his mother to raise him as she saw fit. He was made to bear the prestige strivings of his mother, and although he tried to fulfill her expectations, he resented the demands placed upon him. His efforts to repress this resentment as unworthy appeared in subconsciously activated failures when in public

As mentioned above, the patient held himself personally responsible for the death of his mother, because he had 'failed her' and 'broken his promise.' His rigid conscience structure led to intropunitive reactions to his 'guilt,' because he could not receive punishment from his Mother

Arthur read on as his face hardened into a grimace. This was his file. He took everything it said and tried it on like an article of clothing to see if it fit. Finally, he saw them before him, all the tormentors that had brought him to this place. All the things that Dr. Roland had hinted at and prodded Arthur to understand in the past months were in black and white on the pages in front of him.

Suddenly there was a noise at the door. Arthur quickly closed the folder and sat in his usual chair, just as the doctor walked in.

"Good morning, Arthur. How are you today?"

"Oh, I feel fine, Doctor," Arthur had learned sometime before that a negative answer could possibly mean more anti-depressant drugs or even more shock treatments.

"Well, that's good," said the doctor. "Let's see now, you've been with us for quite a while, haven't you, Arthur?"

"Yes, I have."

"That's just what I wanted to talk to you about. You have made some good progress, Arthur, and I feel that it might be best if you go the short distance remaining on your own, out in the world. Would you like that?"

"Why, yes sir, I would."

"Well, think about it. We'll talk some more about it later."

They never give us enough time, Dr. Roland thought after Arthur had left. They never give us enough time, or space, or money to be sure. We have to rush them through and be right or else it's too little, too late.

"It seems that no one has ever wanted me, except my mother. I let her down. Everybody knew I was a failure," Arthur moaned.

"Come on, fella, things can't be that bad," urged the policeman.

"No? Did you see them in there? They're sitting around drinking coffee. I'm not a person to them. They don't want me. Do you see that crowd down there? They want me."

"Come back in Arthur. Let's talk it over," a voice pleaded from the window.

"Oh, go away, Mr. Wellington. Just go away . . . when did you ever care about me?"

"That's not true, Arthur. You know we all care about you. We're all one big family at the office. We're a team and we have to stay together."

"How about when you have so much fun telling your friends about 'Crazy' Arthur? How he locked his tie in his desk drawer and it took him fifteen minutes to figure out what was wrong before he went to lunch. You didn't realize I heard that, did you, Mr. Wellington? What position do I play on your team, water-boy?"

Mr. Wellington's face reddened as it disappeared from the window. "They're all like that . . ." Arthur droned.

"So why not get out?" asked the officer. "But you don't have to jump off the side of a building to do it. Look, you don't have to stay here. You can go somewhere else and start over again. Somewhere where people do care about you. Killing yourself isn't the answer. It isn't even the easy way out.

"You see that crowd down there? They're people almost like you or

me, except they want to see you jump so badly they're almost drooling. They keep saying, 'Oh, I hope that young man doesn't jump,' but what they really want is to see you splattered all over that sidewalk down there. In a way they're vampires. They can't live without that kind of gore. You are not a person to them. You're a game. If you think they care who you are or why you're out here, forget it. Tomorrow they will have forgotten all about you, whether you jump or not.

"You're amusement for their lunch hour and they'll be getting impatient pretty soon. Come in, fella. You don't have to entertain them. They won't be sorry for you or for making fun of you as they're doing now. They'll just call you a product of our twisted times, not knowing they're talking about themselves, and then they'll forget you.

"Come on in and give it another try."

Long moments later, Arthur still stood looking directly into the policeman's eyes. Slowly turning his head, he heard the bustling noise of the mob and saw the ant size figures crowding around the building below. Then he slowly turned back.

Suddenly the voice of a drunken co-worker returning from lunch broke the silence.

"What?" he sputtered, pointing a shaky finger at the window. "It's Crazy Arthur! Hey Arthur, what kind of a stupid grandstand play are you trying now?"

Someone inside let out a terrified scream and the questioner was pulled violently back from the window. By the time the others got there, Arthur was gone.

CONFESSION

—*Jeffrie Ann Hall*

Come here, my child.
Tell me your troubles, the things that perplex you.
How many times have you said to yourself,
“I wish there were someone to go to, someone to talk to?”
Here am I.
Unburden yourself to my attentive ears.
Nothing you can say will shock or embarrass me;
I am too old to hear anything I have not heard before.
I am too old to grieve over nothing,
Or to laugh at serious things.
But I am not old enough, sometimes,
To know the difference.
Isn't it strange how old eyes see
What young, strong eyes do not?
Come tell me, child, of the angry words,
Words you speak but do not understand.
Wouldn't the world be an easier place if we could recall what we wished?
But there, I must not talk.
I am here to listen.
Tell me your thoughts
 What's that, my child?
 No, no. No answers,
 I have no answers for your cries.
 But that does not mean that I cannot hear your questions.
Come, tell me your troubles, child,
Make me young again.

The Gull

—*Barbara M. Bray*

One golden autumn afternoon a young cat lazed upon a salt-drenched wooden pier. Lulled by the monotonous pounding of the waves against a nearby bulkhead, he sniffed the fish-redolent breeze and gazed about him. His rumbling stomach had just tolled the approaching dinner hour when a large grey bird wheeled into sight. The gull paused for a moment above one of the pier posts before dropping to rest upon it, gloriously plump and top-heavy upon her toothpick legs. The cat opened his eyes wide and passed his pink tongue across his whiskers. A monotonous marine fare had whetted his appetite for fowl.

With seeming nonchalance he pulled himself upright. Cautiously he ambled on padded feet toward his future feast. The gull looked at him askance with her beady eye and decided that the social amenities had best be exchanged from a distance. She slowly rose into the air and arched to the sea below. There, bobbing on the undulating ocean swells, she awaited the feline greetings. The cat padded slowly to the pier's edge, and settling himself primly upon the boards, he fixed the gull with innocently wide sulphurous eyes.

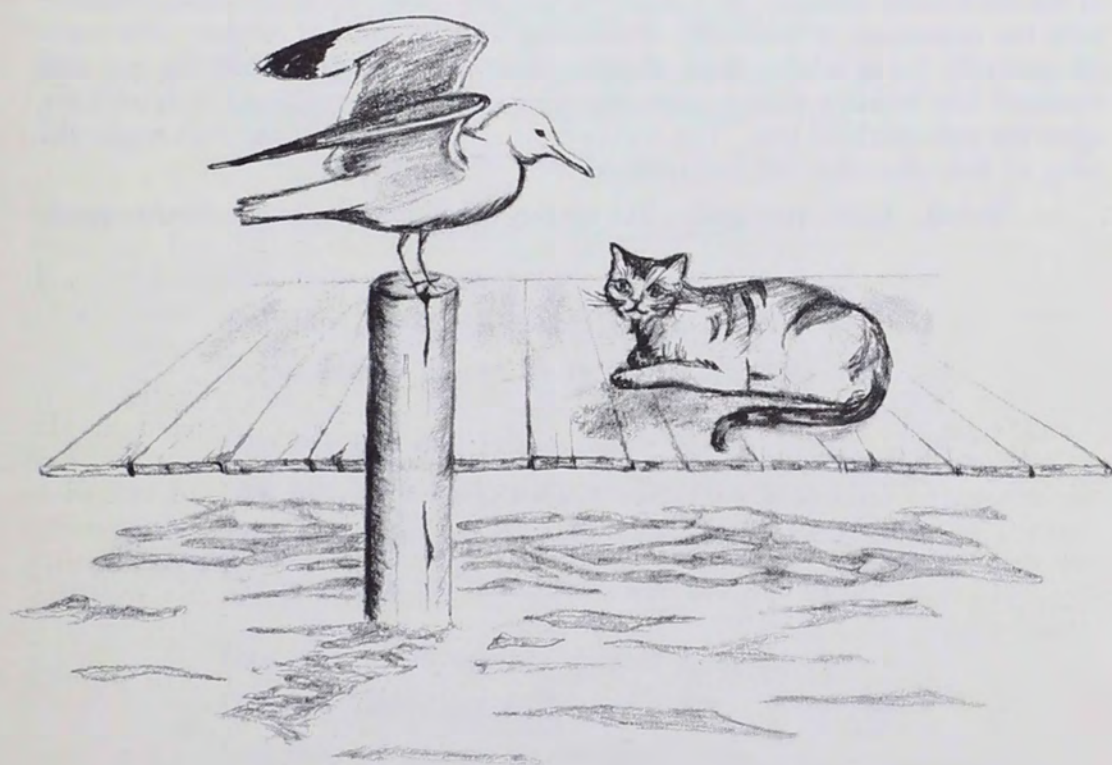
"Tell me," he purringly inquired, "how you manage to sail through the air."

"When I was young," creaked the gull, "my mother told me to jump into the air and have faith, and I would be able to fly."

"Tell me," asked the cat, "how you manage to bob upon the sea like a cork."

"When I was young," replied the gull, "my mother told me to leap into the sea and have faith, and I would be held up."

The cat gazed steadily upon the plump breast of the gull as it rested upon the swells. Only the occasional twitch of his black reptilian tail betrayed his motive. The cat was thinking. The cat was recalling his own youth, his own mother. The cat was remembering the time that his own mother had told him to climb his first piling and to have faith, and he had been able to hold and to climb. The cat was remembering the time that she had told him to jump from the pier into a fishing boat moored several feet away. She had told him to have faith, and he had landed upright upon his four fur feet. "This faith gimmick," the cat thought to himself, "must be the secret of all success. I know how to have faith, and I know already that



with faith I can catch a bird. Now all that I must do is have faith and float across the water to my dinner."

So the cat concentrated; the cat believed; the cat trusted; the cat began to feel his faith within him growing, swelling, expanding, until he felt as rounded by faith as a balloon filled with air. "Now," decided the cat, "I can feel my faith, and I can surely float." Certain of success, he catapulted himself into the air. Confident in his triumph, he somersaulted neatly and landed upon the ocean on all four feet, dropped into the ocean feet first, gasped for air and sank beneath the water's surface, clawing with all four feet and plunged convulsively to the solid sand and rock far below, on all feet.

The gull sat securely upon the billows, a short distance from the point of the cat's damp demise. Her head cocked, she gazed upon his disappearance with the innocence of stupidity, wondering why he did not return. She waited patiently for a while; then, flapping her wings, she climbed the air and resumed her wooden stance upon the pier post, her eyes fixed unblinkingly upon the sun-sparkled sea. The waves beat steadily against the bulkhead; the odor of fish saturated the salt-sprayed air.

Moral: Faith may guide, but reason helps, and genes are fundamental.

One Boy

—Robert Sharpe

One boy, two persons, alone in the crowd
One boy, precocious, unsure, in a cloud
One boy, a witness to conflict within
With no way to lose and no way to win,

One boy, his opposite parts in a fight
One boy, acquainted with nothing but night
One boy, a victim of too keen a sense
Compelled to repent an unknown offense,

One boy, his soul falling slowly apart
One boy, with darkness pervading his heart
One boy, a stranger to shallower men
Yet proud in the thought he was not like them,

One boy, while orbiting worlds spun by
One boy, unwilling to let out a cry
One boy, an inmate in paradox's cell
Put razor to throat, and thus broke the spell.

CINQUAIN: CRUEL LIFE

—Barbara Ann Bald

Cruel life
Starves God's children,
Freezes loved pets, destroys
Men's minds — yet is, of all tenures,
Most dear.

The Quality of Revenge

—Craig Bender

I kept thinking of his grandfather who always sat on a bench in Parker's country store over on Apple Street. He always seemed to be a monument to me. A monument to old age, a monument because he was always there, in the same far corner of old man Parker's red bench, the same white bible held unopened in his left hand. I never knew if I liked him or not for sure. He had a cane which I distrusted. I'd heard too much of the canings old schoolmasters used to give. Not that he ever used the cane on me, or anyone else as far as I knew. But it worried me. When I'd enter the store, he'd shift his weight onto the cane as if he were about to get up. Then he'd stare at me, his upper lip twitching toward the wart under his eye. Just as I'd pass him, he would lean forward even more on his cane (lurch almost) and he would whisper, "Rejoice." The word seemed to help him. He'd lean back and sigh. His tongue would roll across his upper lip. And then his eyelids would lower, and his head nod in profound satisfaction. The tic in his lip would stop. I never knew what to make of it. "Rejoice." There was something morbid about the way he said it. It was a *command* to rejoice. It was as if he were really saying, "Rejoice, for the end is nigh," or "Rejoice, Christ died for you." Whatever it was, there was a hint of death or eternity in it. I always felt embarrassed for him—the way his lip would tic, the way his tongue would roll across his upper lip, the word he would say. Nobody said "rejoice" anymore; it was old-fashioned. But, at the same time, I'd always feel guilty about my embarrassment. "Rejoice." There was a truth in that word that could not be denied; it forced itself upon me. First I'd think, Rejoice? What for? And then, Rejoicing is a heck of a lot better than whatever I'm doing now. Then it would seem to me almost like a benediction. There was something holy about his greeting, something profound. It just didn't seem right for us to stone his grandson Kevin.

Actually, "stoning" isn't quite the word. We didn't stand around him in a circle and throw rocks at him the way the Pharisees stoned Stephen. Instead Kevin had fled thirty yards down below us and hidden behind a big oak tree. None of us could even see him. I wasn't even sure he was there. I just took Danny's word for it.

It was Danny's voice sounding out from the Knob* that called me to the stoning in the first place. I figured that if Danny were shouting, he must

*The Knob is about four acres of wooded hill, suitable for hiking, shooting targets, fort-building, honey-suckle-sucking, cigarette smoking, grapevine swinging, and other Tom Sawyerisms.

be shouting to or at somebody else. So I went to see what was happening. I was hoping though that Danny wasn't shouting *at* somebody; he had a wicked temper. I remember it hadn't been a year since Danny had broken his dog's jaw with a baseball bat. He and I were walking home from a ball game. He was angry because his team had lost. It had been a close game. Then Scooter (that was his dog's name) started greeting him—jumping up and down, begging for some sign of affection, almost tripping Danny in the process. Danny blew up. . . . After I had fought the bat away from Danny, I found the dog on the back porch by the milk box. Its jaw was knocked off its hinges; it just hung. I got sick right there on Danny's back porch.

Unfortunately, from the harshness of his voice, it seemed that Danny was yelling *at* somebody. His voice came from somewhere near the grapevine. That's where I found him.

He *was* shouting at somebody, somebody down in the woods below the swing. Most of what he was shouting was incoherent — something about "murderer" and "see how you like it" and a liberal mixture of cuss words. The latter came out distinctly. Beside Danny stood Dumbo, who threw in a few words when he could. (We called him Dumbo because he had what-we-called a "dumb" habit of repeating what someone else had just said, and, coincidentally, because his ears stuck out. His real name is Edwin Steele). Tommy, who stood back about ten feet, must have just arrived. He looked as puzzled as I did.

When the shouting had subsided enough so that I figured that I could outshout Danny, I yelled, "What's up, Doc?"

He whirled around and looked at me, his left eyebrow high on his forehead, his mouth askew in scorn, as if he were thinking of the perfect squelch. Obviously my lightweight "What's up, Doc?" hadn't quite measured up to his weightier, more masculine cuss words. I was waiting with part fear, part resignation. Then suddenly he smiled. Suddenly the storm clouds in his face just disappeared. I felt as if I were in the eye of a hurricane — peaceful, yet strangely treacherous. I knew he had plans for me. He must have seen me suddenly as an ally in disguise, someone useful to him. The way he looked at Tommy I got the idea that he would be useful to Danny, too.

"Well, Dip, it's like this. It's not what's up this time. It's what's down." He paused to savor his witticism. Dumbo suppressed a giggle. Tommy and I still looked puzzled. Danny was displeased with our response, so he cut the silence short. "Look over there."

"Where?"

"Over there, Dip!"

"Where?"

"I don't see it either," said Tommy.

"Do I have to take you by the hand and show you?" He did. Tommy followed quietly behind. "There."

"Is it dead?"

"Of course, it's dead, Dip. Birds don't sleep on their sides."

"Why is it dead?" Tommy asked. I could see something was bothering Tommy. I could see it in his eyes, in the furrows of his forehead. I remembered seeing that look before when his Dad had been fired from his job as a truck driver. All that day Tommy had a serious, bothered look. And that night we (he had asked me along) went down to the shipping house where his father had worked, and climbed over the fence. I watched Tommy kneel down beside the front tire of a tractor trailer. Then I heard a hiss. Tommy didn't miss a truck. He let the air out of all the tires. After that, the look left him. But it cost his father plenty. And I could see the same serious look on his face now. His hands were even trembling. Knowing what I knew, I was worried what Tommy might do this time. "It's my cardinal. It's mine. The one that lives . . . usta live out in my backyard. It's my cardinal!"

"Aw, dry up, Squirt. So what?"

Tommy went on talking. His hands trembled even more. "It's my bird. Somebody killed my bird."

"Well, it *is* pretty. Sure is pretty. But Crap! What's a bird? What good is it?"

"Yeah, what good's it for?"

"Who killed my bird?"

"What's it good for, anyway? Now Squirt, that's the way you've got to look at these things. Like — whoever it is that killed it. Uh . . . what did you call your cardinal anyhow? Didn't you give it a name?"

"Tommy, it might *not* be your cardinal. Listen to me — take it easy, Tommy. You can't even tell if the cardinal is really yours or not."

"Who killed it!" My attempt to save the situation had been futile. Tommy hadn't heard.

Tommy's anger may have been a little early, a little too violent, but Danny (I could swear it) had been waiting for his outburst, actually waiting for it. He picked up the bird nonchalantly and tossed it up and down in his palm — waiting for complete attention. Having got our attention, he arranged the cardinal on his palm in sitting position, as if he were about to set the bird loose into the air. Of course, it didn't fly; it tilted side-heavy and fell. It was as if Danny had thrown a knife into a table and declared vengeance, western movie style, when the bird hit the ground and Danny hissed, "Kevin did it." Tommy gasped.

He had to struggle with his throat. "Where — where i-i-is he? Where i-is he!"

"Now listen, Tommy. Maybe this isn't your bird. Now listen for once, huh." I was still trying to pacify him.

"Shut up, Sammy . . . Where is he? Where is he! Danny! Dumbo!!"

"Yes chief. Oh . . . uh . . . uh . . . What did you say?"

"Where is he!"

"Who?"

"Kevin, you dope."

"Oh. He's behind the oak."

"Which oak?"

"Where I've been throwing at. (Throws a stone.) That one. The big oak."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure he's sure. He's been throwing rocks at him and keeping a lookout all the time you dips were gawking over this cardinal."

His statement, as usual, was directed at me. As I remember, I was *still* gawking over the cardinal. I guess I was paying my last respects to the bird. There's just something sad about the death of anything that moves. I even have to convince myself that it really is dead. This cardinal, for example, still had its eyes open. And they seemed to be staring at me as if he were waiting for me to say something. I had to torture myself into believing, first, that it was not staring at me, and then, that it really was dead. After I convinced myself of this, I couldn't stop thinking of how beautiful a cardinal is — against the snow. It was one of the few pretty things left alive for a boy with a busted wrist in a cold, monotonous winter.

I picked him up and held him for the last time — sort of a viewing. I remember when I was holding him and trying to find where he'd been hit, a breeze brushed and stirred his feathers in the same slow way that it does when it stirs ashes. The stirring feather meant something, symbolized something that I was fighting not to realize, fighting not to accept. That life is turned to dust; beauty to ashes. I couldn't even find where he'd been hit. I had to find out. I didn't want to believe the bird was really dead until I found out.

Those worms weren't really dead. I was four then, so memory is a little hazy. It was one day in April my mother tells me. It had rained so hard the night before that it washed the worms out onto the driveway. I remember feeling a little sick when I first smelled that fleshy odor of worms. I thought that they were rotting. So I went inside and got a shovel and a piece of tin foil. (The foil was for a sort of mass casket.) I was gathering up all the worms, my nose squinched up to hold back the smell, when suddenly a worm (which I thought had been rotting) began squirming. The fear that I had almost buried those worms alive still hadn't left me as I stood there with the bird in my hands. I didn't want to chance it with a cardinal. I didn't want to bury *him* alive. I had to know where he'd been hit.

"Where was he hit?"

"So he's behind the tree, huh?" I could tell by Tommy's slow way of talking that he was still controlled by his own anger.

"Yeah, that's where he is." (Dumbo, the yeah-man)

"You're sure."

"Yeah, I'm sure."

"Well, then we've got to do something about it . . . I know! Let's give him some of his own medicine."

"Now listen, Tommy. I wouldn't a told you if I'd a known you were going this far. Please, Tommy, let's not kill him or nothing."

"I didn't plan to. Say, what kind of guy do you think I am, anyway?"

They had ignored my question. I had to know. "Where was he hit?"

"Huh?"

"Where was he hit?"

"You don't make sense, Dip. Shut up . . ."

"Yeah, shut up."

"Look, Dip. Can't you see we're trying to figure out what to do?"

"Oh, I guess you're right. We ought to do something about it."

"That's just what we were thinking, Cheesehead."

"Are you going to give him a burial?"

"Huh?"

"Huh?"

"Huh?"

"We could make him a cross and put flowers on his grave."

"We weren't going to go that far."

"Well, you guys don't have to. But I expected you to go that far, Tommy. After all it's *your* cardinal . . ."

"What are you talking about!"

"Well, I'm going that far anyway. After all, he was about the only thing I had that was pretty this winter. Snow isn't pretty anymore when you got a smashed wrist." I thought to myself that the cardinal had been like a get-well card to me.

"Dip, *what* are you talking about!"

"Well, you wouldn't want him to lay around and rot, would you?"

"What?!"

"Yeah. What!"

"The bird. *If* it really is dead, you wouldn't want him to lay around and rot and stink, would you? I mean the least we can do is give him a nice burial."

"Oh. The bird. We were talking about what to do to Kevin and you start talking about burials. Crap, you gotta watch that stuff! You really had me scared."

"Me too."

"Well, Danny. What *are* we going to do? I'll tell you this. Nobody kills my cardinal and gets away with it!"

"O. K., Squirt, O. K. Here's what we do." Danny picked a stone from the ground and threw it down into the woods. It curved and passed the oak about thirty feet in the air. Tommy and Dumbo followed suit.

I just stood there for awhile — thoughts flooding my brain. How did they know that Kevin really had killed the cardinal? What if they hit him? After all, it's only a cardinal. Kevin's a human being — with feelings. But maybe a cardinal has feelings too. How much feeling did Kevin show for the cardinal? It had been beautiful for me when I had my wrist busted. And then look what Kevin did to my sister. How much feeling did he show for her? — throwing green apples at her. She had to get four stitches in her eyelid. But then look at his grandfather, always saying, "Rejoice," almost as if he were blessing me. Such a holy man couldn't have a grandson who is all bad, could he? Kevin is probably pretty good somehow. It's just not right to throw stones at him. I had to tell Danny it wasn't right.

He disagreed. "Crap!" he said. "You dip! You can't even see him. How do you expect to hit him? All we're doing is scaring him for awhile. What a dip!"

I thought that he was probably right about it being impossible to hit him. In fact, Kevin probably wasn't even behind the tree. Probably he had sneaked away. Nobody in his right mind would stick around when he knew he was going to get stones thrown at him. I thought I'd just throw along with the others, and count how many times I could hit the oak. I had often thrown at telephone poles and counted my hits. It was all part of my dream to be a big league pitcher.

"Come on, Dip."

I bent down and pulled a handful of stones (mostly shale) from the earth. I noticed when I threw them such a long distance that they curved and dipped. By snapping my wrist the wrong way, I could even throw screwballs. It gave me a sense of power to see the stones I threw swoop past the oak sort of like a mighty hawk. At first I couldn't hit the tree at all. The stones were curving too much. But gradually I began to calculate how far I had to pitch out so that the stone would curve back into the tree. The pock of the first accurate hit gave me a new and more exciting sense of power. The pock sounded like bat soundly meeting ball. I threw harder so that the pock of the stone against the tree would sound more sharply, until it would resemble the sound of a home run. I was sure that my stones could be heard all over the Knob. And I was proud of the force and accuracy of my arm.

"Hey, Dip. Don't throw so darn hard. You could kill somebody that way."

"Danny, I'm only throwing for the fun of it. Get off my back for once. I'd just like to see how hard I can throw."

"Well, you just might kill somebody. So ease off, willya?"

"Yeah, you just might."

"Oh shut up, Elephant Ears." But Danny (and Dumbo) were right I thought. If I was going to throw for the fun of it, at least I had to watch that I didn't hurt anyone. So I contented myself with throwing screwballs. After throwing about five or six, I noticed that the flight of my screwballs crossing over their stones — Danny's, Tommy's, and Dumbo's — made web designs, cast just short of the big oak. I was proud that I could throw those screwballs and make something out of our throws. It made me feel that my

screwball knitted us all into a team, and I was the leader for once. Soon the whole business of Kevin and the cardinal became very unreal to me. It all became a game or a series of different games. First, it was the casting of webs. Then it was trying to throw a stone over the oak. Then it was the swooping motion of the stone's flight. And soon it was the big leagues again. And finally it was curving the stones just behind the tree — throwing the stone far out so that it would curve right behind the tree. This took a great deal of finesse because it was too easy to throw the stone into the tree or far down into the woods.

I had three stones in my hand when Danny said we ought to cut it out. He mumbled something about the coward going home. Then when he saw me and Tommy, he made himself superior again and said, "We've scared him enough for today." Dumbo, of course, agreed.

All of us except Danny had a few stones left. So we threw those before leaving. It seemed a sin to waste a stone. My three were thick pieces of shale, designed to curve as well as any stone. The first dipped and fell short. But then some stones worked that way no matter how you threw them. Even when you'd throw them right, they'd dip . . . as if they were top-heavy. The second flew on a low, swift arc, a perfect throw. It hooked neatly and came in just behind the oak. Someone screamed. Gaped. Then showed a face. It was Kevin (I didn't throw the third stone), his face screwed up into a wordless shriek. Above his eyebrow was a streak too red to be real. Blood. I couldn't believe it. Blood. He screamed. His voice went right into my nerves. I was so giddy I could hardly stand it. He wheeled and started to run (stumble really) down through the woods. Even after I had lost sight of him, I could still hear his screams. I stood there, my giddiness emptying me of everything but anger at myself and Fate.

He wasn't supposed to be back there. Why hadn't he run? "Fathead! If you had stopped when I said to . . ." Why *hadn't* he run? He had all the chance in the world to run. "Crap! Sam, don't you have any sense?" Why did *that* stone have to be the one? A minute later and we'd have been gone, and nothing would have happened. "Did you see the blood on his face? Did you see it?" It was just bad luck. Bad luck always haunts me. I didn't want to hit him. "Sam! You coulda killed him." Why didn't he run? Why? He should have . . . "Yeah, you could have killed him." How stupid can you get? A stone's bound to get you sooner or later if you just sit there. "Just like the cardinal. You might have killed him just like he killed the cardinal." I didn't even know where he was. I never even saw him. Why me? Why did I have to be the one to hit him?

"Maybe he did kill him! Then we'd really be in trouble."

"Even if he didn't kill him, he really hurt him. Did you hear the way he screamed? It's going to take stitches at least. We're going to be in trouble no matter what."

I just stood there stunned. I couldn't get his face out of my mind. The wordless shriek. And another face, another expression. I kept imagining Kevin's crouching and trembling near the base of the oak. I kept imagining the terror in his face—knowing that stones were flying near, cringing inside at the cruelty of his own act, cringing outside from the terror, the cruelty, of our act.

"Yeah, did you see the blood?"

"It's gonna take stitches."

"Yeah, it might even take a casket."

"Where did he get to?"

"Yeah, where?"

"Sammy must have finked out on us. Where did . . . ? There he is!"

I wasn't going to stick around. I could sense their rising anger so well that I knew just about when they would take out after me. Just as we had stood up there righteously demanding the cardinal's revenge, its right to live, so they would be screaming for Kevin's revenge. I wasn't going to stand around for that. I wasn't going to make Kevin's mistake. I couldn't run very fast (I was too fat), but I knew they couldn't throw very well on the run. A stone went past me and bounced down a sidewalk. Another came close to my arm. By the time I reached my house, I had started choking. I pulled frantically at the door, blind from the queer scratching and choking in my throat. If I could only get inside before they picked up more stones I yanked. The door opened.

As I slammed the door behind me and turned to look at my pursuers, I heard the dining room window break. They found me in the cellar.

THE END

THE BULL

Head lowered, he charges across my room
Eyes straight ahead and gleaming, he sees nothing but his target
Lost to him is doubt or double-think
Lost to him is wonderment of causes
Known only is the goal, right or wrong, to be destroyed

—*b. r. r.*

CHINESE LANDSCAPE

Fluffy grey-gold kite-clouds trail their
Foam tails
Across the
Sky.

Light-voiced breezes strum thousand-stringed
Lyres among tall trees
In joyful
Song.

The new March
Is born,
A fine strong son.

And
With the son
A fertile year is cradled in a new-born spring.

—*Susan Kegerise*

